EXHIBIT B

(AOL 167) Customizing Search Results Based on Information Obtained From a Source Identified to the Search Application by the Searching

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INNOVATION:

This innovation focuses on improving current search methodologies by allowing a user to specify a user-selected information source to be consulted by a search application when performing a search. In this manner, results from a conventional search engine may be refined or re-organized based on data independently maintained by a ratings service.

For example, www.zagats.com is a ratings service for restaurants. When searching for a restaurant using a conventional search engine, a user may find it helpful to filter or sort results based on the Zagats rating. More specifically, the user may wish to display only restaurants with a Zagats rating higher than two, or they may wish to sort all restaurants hits based on the Zagats rating. Similarly, hotels may be filtered or sorted by AAA ratings.

One implementation contemplates express entry by the user of information in a search string to enable identification of such a source. In an alternative implementation, a source (e.g., Zagats or AAA) and an appropriate rating for this source (e.g., Zagats = 2) may be associated with a user as part of general user-specified search parameters, which parameters may be consulted automatically for searches for appropriate subject matter. See earlier disclosure entitled "Disclosure (AOL-166).

In either case, the results obtained using a conventional search may be compared against the identified source ratings service and filtered or sorted appropriately. This function may be performed by a search engine, or alternatively, it may be performed by an application incorporating a search engine such that no modification is necessary to conventional search engines.

PROBLEM ADDRESSED/STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Conventional Search Engines: Compare input search terms against Metadata in order to identify displayable results. These processes also allow for refined searching of input terms against particular identified types of metadata. For instance, one performing a patent search, a user is able to enter "SN" to indicate that subsequent search terms should be applied against serial number metadata. Furthermore, some of the conventional search engines permit comparison of input search terms against full or partial text.

When applying this conventional technology, users typically obtain several pages of search results for any given search query, necessitating extended periods of review. Clearly, improved search technologies are needed.

To the extent that this technology may be retrofit to improve existing search engines, it would be valuable for AOL to own such improvements, even under the current strategy of incorporating best of breed search engines.

BACKGROUND ART:

Conventional scanner engines contemplate explicit entry of search terms, not search sources, into search storing interfaces. They also may contemplate customization of search sources during application configuration, but are not known to customize source per search or search subject.

OTHER APPLICATIONS OF INVENTION

CONCEPTION

PAST PUBLIC DISCLOSURE
None.

FUTURE PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

None anticipated.

SEARCH TERMS

Search, personalized, personalization, customized

AOL PRODUCTS

None contemplated presently.

POTENTIAL LICENSEES

All major search providers, and applications incorporating or leveraging such search technologies. Examples include: Google, Yahoo, Microsoft MSN, Alta Vista, Lycos, as search providers and Microsoft and Earth Link as applications that integrate search technology.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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